

SUN-BLOTCH OF AVOCADO IN FLORIDA

C. P. Seymour

Avocado, *Persea americana* Miller, has been cultivated in tropical and subtropical areas of the Americas since pre-Columbian times. It was first reported in Florida as early as 1833. Today the avocado industry is concentrated in Dade, Palm Beach, and Highlands counties. Some hardy avocado varieties may grow as far north as Jacksonville; however, the general distribution is south of Tampa on the west coast, Cape Canaveral on the east coast, and Winter Haven in the center of the state. The coastal distribution of avocado closely resembles that of coconut, *Cocos nucifera* L.

The avocado varieties grown in Florida may grow to 60 ft. Leaves are petioled, oblong or elliptic-lanceolate to oval, and 3 to 16 inches long. They are leathery and dark green when mature. The flowers are small yellow-green and borne in large racemes (1,3). The fruit is thick skinned and colored green, black, purple, or reddish depending on the variety, has one large seed, and may weigh up to 5 lbs (3). The value of the 1973-74 crop was 7.2 million dollars and was grown on approximately 7000 acres (personal communication, Dr. Carl Campbell).

Sun-blotch is a virus disease which has been spreading in recent years and is of growing concern to the avocado industry.

SYMPTOMS. The most consistent symptom of sun-blotch is the yellowish or white streaking and spotting of the bark, twigs, limbs, and fruit. The streaks are usually yellow, but at times, especially on young tress, the streaks may be whitish or almost colorless (5). The fruit lesions are yellow to reddish (fig. 1).

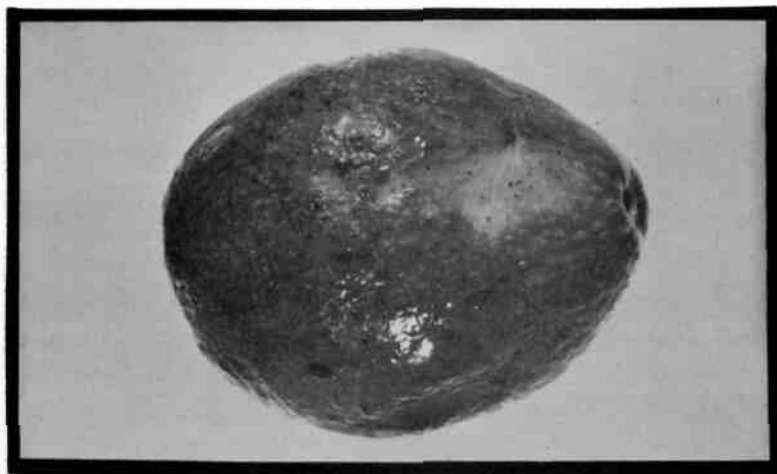


Fig. 1. Sun-blotch of avocado showing yellow lesion on fruit.

CONTROL. Prevention is the key for control of sun-blotch. It is both bud and seed transmitted (5); thus, the use of propagative parts that are free of the sun-blotch virus and the use of seed from trees that have been indexed and determined to be disease free are recommended disease control measures for avocado growers (2,5). Avocado trees may be symptomless carriers of this virus which necessitates indexing to be sure of disease freedom. The California Avocado Growers Association, in cooperation with the California Department of Agriculture and the University of California, presently conducts such indexing. The commercial practice in Florida is to obtain the largest seed possible from cull fruit for new plantings without apparent regard to sun-blotch. This practice undoubtedly has a bearing on the increased incidence of this disease in avocado groves (4).

Literature Cited

1. Bailey, L. H.- 1971. Manual of cultivated plants. The MacMillan Co., New York. 1116 p.
2. Drake, R. J., and J. M. Wallace. 1974. Transmission of avocado sun-blotch virus by embryo graftage. Calif. Avocado Soc. Yearbook, p. 135-136.
3. Malo, S. E. , and C. W. Campbell. 1972. The avocado. Univ. Fla. Fruit Crops Fact Sheet No. 3. 4 p.
4. Soule, J., and F. Lawrence. 1969. How to grow your own avocado tree. Fla. Agr. Ext. Serv. Circ. 340. 10 p.
5. Zentmyer, G. A., A. O. Paulus, C. D. Gustafson, J. M. Wallace, and R. M. Burns. 1965. Avocado diseases. Calif. Agr. Exp. Sta. Ext. Serv. Circ. 534. 11 p.